

OPEN HEART FOR THE GREAT SAVIOR

NO. 669

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,
even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood,
nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”
John 1:12.*

DIVINE truth is one, but it is many-sided, when you have looked at it from one point of view you may reverse your position, and though the truth at which you look will be the same, you will marvel at its freshness as seen from another aspect. This morning we sought to show you how Jesus Christ received sinners [See Sermon #665—“*OPEN HOUSE FOR ALL COMERS*”], tonight it shall be our endeavor, as the Holy Spirit may enable us, to set forth how sinners receive Christ. It is perfectly true that the work of salvation lies first and mainly in Jesus receiving sinners to Himself to pardon, to cleanse, to sanctify, to preserve, to make perfect, but at the same time, the sinner also receives Christ, there is an act on the sinner’s part by which, being constrained by divine grace, he opens his heart to the admission of Jesus Christ, and Jesus enters in, and thenceforth dwells in the heart, and reigns and rules there. To a gracious readiness of heart to entertain the friend who knocks at the door, we are brought by God the Holy Ghost, and then He sups with us and we with Him.

We shall take tonight the view of the subject opened up before us by this text, and we shall begin *by simply and shortly describing how the sinner receives Christ, secondly, the privilege, or power, which is conferred as the result of this reception of Christ, and thirdly, the great change which is involved in the fact that the sinner has received Christ, the fact that the sinner has been born again from above, “not of the will of man, but of God.”*

I. As briefly, then, as may be, and very simply indeed, we will describe WHAT IT IS FOR THE SINNER TO RECEIVE CHRIST.

This receiving Christ lies in several things. If a man would receive Christ he must, first of all, *receive Him in His person as He is revealed in the Sacred Scriptures*. We are taught over and over again in Scripture that Jesus Christ is Immanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh, JEHOVAH’S equal in fashion as a man. The “WORD”—that “Word” of which it is said, “The word was God”—was “made manifest” in flesh amongst men, and they “beheld his glory.” Though He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet “He made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

This was a new and startling doctrine when first preached to heathen sages, that God should take humanity into so intimate a connection with Himself, as really and truly to be man and God in the same person, but it is a doctrine which must be received by you or else you cannot receive Christ. My Master will not be satisfied with the acknowledgment that His character is lovely, His doctrine pure, and His moral teaching super-excellent, He will not be content with your admission that He is a prophet greater than any prophet that ever came before or after Him, He will not rest satisfied with your admission that He is a teacher sent from heaven, and a being who on account of His virtues is now peculiarly exalted in heaven, all this is well, but it is not enough, you must also believe that He who as man was born of the Virgin, and was dandled upon her lap at Bethlehem, was as God none other than the everlasting Lord, without beginning of days or end of years.

You do not receive Christ in very deed and truth unless you believe in His proper humanity and actual Godhead. Indeed, what is there for you to receive if you do not receive this? A Savior who is not divine can be no Savior for us. How can a mere man, however eminent, deliver his fellows from sins such as yours and mine? How can he bear the burden of our guilt any more than we can ourselves bear it, if there is no more about him than about any other singularly virtuous man? An angel would stagger beneath the load of human criminality, and much more would this be the case with even a perfect man. It needed those mighty shoulders—

“Which bear the earth’s huge pillars up,”

to sustain the weight of human sin, and carry it into the wilderness of forgetfulness. You must receive Christ, in order to be saved by Him, as being God though man.

But, my dear friend, the mere belief of this doctrine will not save anybody. There are many persons who have no need to fear the curses of the Athanasian Creed, nor the test of any other dogmatic way of expressing the fact of the deity of Christ, but who are, nevertheless, very far from having received Christ Jesus Himself. A man may believe another to be a clever physician, and yet if he has a personal objection to him, he may refuse to receive him as such. If a man would receive Jesus rightly he must, in the next place, *accept Him in all His offices.*

Our blessed Lord has three main offices. We find Him spoken of as “prophet,” “priest,” and “king,” and men must be willing to take Him in each and all of the three. As a “*prophet*” He teaches, what He has received of God He manifests to man. Am I willing to abide by His teaching? Do I take His words, and the words which He delivered by His apostles, as being my directory and rule? I have a certain “doxy” which some call “heterodoxy,” but which, perhaps, I think to be “orthodoxy,” but can I sincerely say that Jesus Christ is the dictator of my orthodoxy? Do I take Him and His teaching to be the truth by which I will abide? I find one church holding one creed, and another church holding another, do I look at all these standards of faith, and say of them, “I will follow them as far as they follow Christ, but neither to cardinal, bishop, synod, nor presbytery will I yield my faith”? I must first know whether the teaching of these men is in accordance with the teaching of Him whom I take to be my Master and my Teacher.

Whether you are Calvinists, or Arminians, or anything else, dear friends, be first and chiefly Christians—*Christ-ians*—following Christ, receiving Him as the great Expositor to you of God, and of the great truths of revelation. You will tell me you have your “bodies of divinity,” there never was but one “body of divinity,” and that was the “body” of the man, Christ Jesus, do you, abating all prejudices and self-formed opinions, receive our Lord as the great embodiment of truth? The truest and the best system of theology is Jesus Christ, if you learn Him you have all truth, you have nothing in excess, and nothing is omitted. He is the mold of truth into which your prepared mind must be delivered to receive form and shape from His perfect wisdom. Our hearts must receive Him as the truth of God—

*“Thou are the Truth, Thy word alone
True wisdom can impart;
To Thee I yield a willing mind,
And open all my heart.”*

If I receive Jesus as “prophet,” I must also take Him as a “*priest*.” Herein, indeed, mainly lies His work. He came to purify men from sin, He stood before God offering a sacrifice of propitiation, by which the guilt of man is removed. If I am not willing to receive Him as an atoning sacrifice, it is in vain for me to esteem Him as an exemplar. His cross of atonement is inseparable from Himself, we must not only glory in Christ, but in Him crucified, or else we shall surely be led forth with His enemies. Jesus must be my only ground of confidence for pardon, I must leave all human priests, I must have done with all trusting in priest-craft in any shape or way, whether it be in the Popish, Anglican, or any other

fashion. I must neither make myself a priest, nor look upon any other man as being priest for me, but I must look upon Jesus Christ as being the only priest in whom I confide, for, mark you, my Master claims the sole prerogative of priesthood, and He only permits us, His people, to hold it as being in Him, and then we all, without exception, can say—"He has made us kings and priests unto God," but any special form of priesthood, peculiar to a certain class, is as alien to the spirit of Christianity as any dogma can possibly be. Every regenerated man becomes a priest by virtue of his union with Christ Jesus, but out of this union it is treason to think of priesthood. You have not received Christ as the truly regenerated children of God have received Him, unless you have accepted Him as the Anointed of God, the only Priest in whom to trust for the salvation of your soul—

*"I other priests disclaim,
And laws, and offerings too,
None but the bleeding Lamb
The mighty work can do;
He shall have all the praise, for He
Has loved, and lived, and died for me."*

If I yield the Lord Jesus Christ fealty as prophet and priest, I must also give Him allegiance as my "king." He will reign where He purifies, He is not content to teach me, but He will also govern me. What say you, my hearer? will you give yourself up, body and soul, to be ruled by Christ absolutely? Shall His laws be binding upon your conscience, and carried out in your life? Do you say now, as before the Searcher of all hearts—"I desire in everything to be guided by Him, to submit myself to His absolute control"? You cannot really and truly receive the Savior unless you are willing to do this. God has not sent His Son to be the messenger of sin, He will forgive your past offenses, but you must in the future submit yourselves to His gentle sway. "Kiss the Son," is one of the first Gospel commands—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little." Remember the doom of those men who said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Take His easy yoke, bow before His throne of love, touch the silver scepter of His grace. "He is your Lord, and worship you Him." Crown Him in the palace of your soul, and set Him on the throne of your affections, for He is the King of angels, and should be the King of men—

*"My King supreme, to Thee I bow,
A willing subject at Thy feet.
All other lords I disavow,
And to Thy government submit:
My Savior King this heart would love,
And imitate the blest above."*

Can we, dear friends, thus accept Christ tonight, as prophet, priest, and king? If not, it is idle to talk about receiving Jesus Christ, we do not know Him, and are not known of Him. Our Lord is not to be divided and parceled out, you must have Him altogether or not at all, you must admit Him in all His offices, or He will not come under your roof.

But a man may agree to all this, and yet not receive Christ. All this is necessary as a stepping stone, but we must go on to something more. I must receive Jesus Christ *as being all this to me*. I must give *myself* to Him, and take Him as *mine*, as having near relationship to *me* and influence upon *me*. Another man's Christ will not save you, He must be *your* Christ.

You have been accustomed to go to a place of worship, and you think, perhaps, "Well, I have gone with the rest, and therefore it is all right with me," and when you have heard a sermon it has been addressed to the congregation in the plural, and you have been content to get a little share of it, but a very little one indeed, now, you have never heard aright unless the truth has come to you in the singular number, as to you alone. The gate of salvation is too narrow for two persons to go through arm-in-arm. You must all singly and

separately pass the portal of eternal life just as you did the portal of natural life. You must feel not only that such and such things are true, but that they are true to *you*.

If you receive our dear Redeemer as a prophet, He begins to exercise that office by telling you that you are naturally lost, ruined, and undone. Do you believe this? Do you believe it to be true of *you*—not of chimney-sweeps, not of streetwalkers, not of thieves in prison only, but of *you*—that you are condemned under the law of God? Do you take home the doctrine of the fall, and of the depravity of human nature as being *true to you*?

He tells you next, that the only way to remove your sin is by His precious blood. Has that blood any reference to *you*? Have you trusted it? Has it washed *you* from sin? You have not taken the Lord Jesus as a priest unless you have believed in His blood as presenting a propitiation for *your* sins, and as cleansing *you* before the holy presence of the Most High God. You have not truly accepted Jesus as King unless you have personally submitted yourself to Him.

In everything else people are so selfish that nothing but personal possession will content them, why are they not thus careful in religious matters? They do not rejoice in the gold in the bank cellars, they aspire to have a good account at their own bankers, they do not consider themselves fed because there may happen to be a fine dinner provided at the London Tavern, they wish to see a feast on their own tables, but in eternal matters of infinitely more moment, men are, alas! so satisfied with generalities.

“Yes, oh! yes, we are a Christian nation.” Wonderfully so! “Of course, we, as a family always go to a place of worship, we are not heathens, we were born in a Christian land.” A “Christian land” it is we must all admit, a very Christian land! Very Christian indeed! Look at our gin palaces, and our divorce courts! But what of that? How can national religion content private conscience, any more than national wealth can console personal poverty? Still, the most of men care so little about their souls that they are satisfied with generalities, they do not come to specialities, to particulars, to personalities. Why should they be so particular in other matters and not in religion? Why seek a personal interest in gold and land, and estates, and then leave heaven and the eternal world to be matters of universal speculation?

You have not received Christ truly if you have not gripped Him with your own hands, and claimed Him as your own. You must get right hold of Him for yourselves. There is no receiving a thing unless the thing received is held by the receiver. Water is poured into a vessel, and anything received is contained within the thing receiving it. So Christ Jesus must come right into you, into personal, conscious relationship with your own spirit so as to act upon you and influence you, or else you have not received Him.

I hope I shall not make what is very plain very difficult. One is sometimes afraid in giving explanations that one may do what a good divine did with Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress,” which he edited with explanatory notes. He went round amongst his flock and said to one good woman, “Do you understand Mr. Bunyan’s Pilgrim?” “Oh yes, sir,” was the answer, “very well indeed, and I hope that one day I shall be able to understand your explanations.” So, perhaps, you will say of me, that you understand the text very well, and you hope that one day you will be able to understand my explanations. Well, I really do not know how to make it plainer. My desire is to say very distinctly that we must receive the Lord Jesus Christ as a Divine being, receive Him in all His offices, and receive Him to ourselves in all those offices.

The pith and marrow of receiving Christ we find in the next remark, *we must trust Him*. The true reception of Christ is explained in the text, “Even to them that *believe on His name*.” To “receive” then, is to “believe,” or, in other words to credit, to rely upon, to trust. Now this is the simplest matter in all the world, and yet, by reason of its simplicity, it is the hardest possible act for human nature to perform. So hard, that although faith still remains the act of man, it is an act which he never performs till he receives faith as the gift of God. We do not naturally care for a plan of salvation so simple and devoid of merit, but there it is and we cannot alter it, nor ought we desire to do so. As many as trust Christ to them He gives power to become the sons of God. The whole act of faith lies in the simple matter of believing that Jesus is God’s appointed Savior, and then throwing ourselves upon Him to save us.

You know what trust is in earthly matters. You rely upon a friend in cases of difficulty, and then you do not trouble yourself about the matter any more. A person offers to pay your debts, and you go home and consider yourself out of debt, you *trust* the person. Now Jesus says to you, “*I* have suffered for the sin of all believers, God can now forgive sin, and yet be a just God, for He has punished *Me* instead of sinners who

believe on Me, trust Me, rely upon Me, and your reliance will be at once evidence to you that I died for you, that I carried your sin, that God punished Me for you, and therefore never can punish you, because in justice He cannot punish both substitute and offender for one and the same sin.” God can never punish Christ for your sin, and then lay the sin at your door, He will not send your substitute to the wars for you, and then demand *you* to go for whom the substitute has already gone. The act of trusting Jesus Christ is the act which brings a soul into a state of grace, and is the mark and evidence of our being bought with the blood of the Lord Jesus. Do you trust Him, dear hearer? Then, if so, you receive Him.

When the soul has thus trusted Christ there comes another form of reception. The outer golden door of faith being first opened, *the inner pearly gate of affection is next thrown open*. They who trust Christ, *love* Christ—

*“Sure I must love; or are my ears
Still deaf, nor will my passions move?
Lord! Melt this flinty heart to tears—
This heart shall yield to death or love.”*

I do not love Christ first, and then trust Him, I in the dawn of spiritual life trust Him to save me, I find He does save me, and I then love Him because He first loved me. I trust Him to deliver me out of the bondage of my daily sins, and then I find that I am stronger against those sins than I ever was before, that I can tread a corruption under foot when I trust Jesus, which I could not battle with before I trusted Him, I find He really does come to my rescue, and therefore I then say to him, “I love You, O my helper and friend,” and thenceforth Jesus Christ lives in my heart.

We cannot help using expressions such as, “Christ living in us,” “Jesus formed in us,” and the like, when talking about these things, and to spiritual men they are very simple, but to the carnal mind they are very difficult. Let us in a word expound them. Just as when a man is attached to a certain friend, that friend is said to “live in his heart,” so Jesus lives in the hearts of His people, because they love Him, and just as when a man has devoted himself to the pursuit of science, that science fills his soul, lives in his soul, makes an abode of it, makes a kingdom of it, where it will rule and reign, so love to Jesus, faith in Him, and devotion to His cause, enter into the soul of the believer and fill it, and thus that soul receives Him.

The first door is the door of simple faith, a door which has been opened in many a sinner’s heart by the loving hand of the Holy Spirit, a door which we pray may be opened in yours tonight. Oh, how gently does the door of faith turn on its hinges! A babe taught of God may push it open. You may not understand all the doctrines of the Bible, but you can understand this—that if you trust in Jesus Christ, you will be a son of God. You cannot perform a complex act of an educated mind, sympathy with poetic imagery and enjoyment of metaphysical refinements are quite beyond you, but if the Holy Spirit teaches you, you will see that the act of faith is not a complex act, but a very simple one indeed. It is so simple, that children of three and four years of age have doubtless been capable of it, and there have been many persons but very little removed from absolute idiocy, who have been able to believe, a doctrine which needs to be reasoned out may require a high degree of mental development, but the simple act of trusting requires nothing of the kind.

If you cannot read a letter in a book you may believe this, that God came down from heaven in the person of Jesus Christ, and suffered for sin Himself, that He might forgive sin and yet be just. I wonder that a man can hear it and not believe it! It is an amazing thing that such good news is not at once believed. Let me repeat it, and oh may the blessed Spirit work faith in you who hear it! God was so just that He could not forgive sin without violating His nature, punishment He must award to transgression, but to make mercy consistent with the severest justice the lawgiver came Himself among men and gave His own shoulders to the scourge, and stretched out His own hands to feel the nail, to suffer, bleed, and die, and now if you trust God in the person of Christ, and do rely upon Him to put away your sin, and if you take Him henceforth to be your King and Ruler, you shall be saved! God be thanked that we have so simple a Gospel to preach, and may the Lord bring many to receive it, that they may become His sons!

II. We now turn to THE GREAT PRIVILEGE which is said in the text to be given to those who trust in the Son of God.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he *power* to become the sons of God.” The word “power” here may be translated “privilege,” and one of the older commentators and translators renders it “honor,” “to them gave he *the honor* to become the sons of God.” Now, what is it to be a “son of God”? This theme demands a seraph to discourse upon it, yea, even an archangel might fail to describe what it is to be a son of God! Certainly it is a point of dignity beyond what any angel ever attained. “Unto which of the angels said he at any time, you are my Son, this day have I begotten you?” But every man, woman, and child who believes in Jesus Christ is thenceforth a child of God.

You know what it is to be the son of a good man and true, and some of you would not willingly renounce your birthright. You claim from your father a child’s privileges, you expect that, being a son, you shall inherit certain rights, and those rights you will duly receive. If I could stand here tonight and say I were a king’s son, many would be wonderfully envious, but what do you say to this—I claim to be one of the sons of God? Does no man’s heart aspire to this felicity? Are there no spirits which pine for this dignity? Oh, the stolid baseness which does not rise to a desire after this glory! Do not suppose that when we say “son of God,” we merely use a metaphor without meaning, no, every person who believes in Christ Jesus is entitled to all rights and privileges which go with a sonship in any case, but which emphatically go with a sonship in the case of a son of God. What, then, are we entitled to, and what do we receive? A complete list I cannot attempt to make out for you, but as my mind suggests the boons of adoption, they shall come before you.

If we are the sons of God, *we are dearly beloved of God*. Did you ever try to get that thought into your mind, *that God loves you*? I can understand that God *pities* me, that is a feeling which so vastly superior a being might well feel to so inferior an existence, but that He *loves* me is scarcely conceivable, although it is most sure and certain. Who can drink this well dry? Who can bear home this fruitful sheaf of delights, this purple cluster of Eshcol? Sons of God are loved of their Father with a love surpassing thought.

They are, indeed, *intimately related* as well as dearly loved. There is a union between God and His sons. There is the same nature in the son as there is in the father, for we become “partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” These are not words of mine, but of the Holy Spirit, one would not have dared to have uttered them if inspiration had not made them ready to our hand. We are most near and dear to the blessed God who fills all in all.

Being sons *we are graciously treated*. “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him.” “He spares them as a man spares his own son that serves him.” Goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Being sons, again, *we are wisely educated*. Parents do not think they have done their duty unless they bring their children up to understand knowledge, and to be fitted to take their part with full grown men. We are trained in the school of God. We receive chastisement, and are made to smart under His rod, we read in the illuminated book of His grace, and are “made meet,” when fully educated, “to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” “All your children shall be taught of the Lord.” There is no school like that in which love is the head master.

As children *we are admitted to a familiarity which servants cannot know*. A child may say and do to his father what no stranger could. God manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. *We have access to God at all hours*, the Father’s door is never locked against His much-loved children. Our cry He knows even as a father knows his child’s cry, from every other sound. *All our wants are provided for, and our Father’s loving heart watches over all our wanderings, and forgives all our offenses*.

Remember that *a father’s relationship is one which cannot be suspended*. I know the old proverb says, “A father’s a father till he gets a new wife,” which implies that he is not afterwards, but that only means as to his actions, for *he must be* a father always, he cannot break off that relationship, he must

cease to be before he can cease to be a father so long as his children live. When I have heard people say that you may be a child of God one day, and a child of the devil the next, I have felt inclined to buy them a dictionary, so that they might know the meaning of the word “father.” What a solecism! What a misuse of words do they commit! If I am my father’s child I am so, and there is no power, human or divine—I speak with reverence—that can unchild me. Adoption might cease to operate but birth never. I *must be* the child of him that begat me, and so, if I am a child of God, begotten unto God by the incorruptible seed of His Word, there is no power, infernal or divine, that can possibly rob me as a child of God of this privilege, a child I *am*, and a child I *must be*.

So then, we have honorable standing, safe-abiding, blessed inheritance, and perfected education, all belonging—to whom? Why, to as many as receive Christ, that is to as many as trust Him. Poor trembling soul, why should not you be in that number?

III. The third point was to be, THE GREAT WORK WHICH IS NECESSARILY INVOLVED IN THIS ACT OF RECEIVING CHRIST.

Every man who trusts the Lord Jesus has been born again. The question was once mooted in an assembly of divines as to whether a person first had faith or regeneration, and it was suggested that it was a question which must forever be unanswerable, that the process, if such it be, must be simultaneous, that no sooner does the divine life come into the soul than it believes on Christ. You might as well ask whether in the human body there is first the circulation of the blood or the heaving of the lungs, both are essential ingredients in life, and must come at the same time. If I believe in Jesus Christ I need not ask any question as to whether I am regenerated, for no unregenerate person ever could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if regenerated I must believe in Jesus, for he who does not do so is clearly dead in sin.

See, then, the folly of persons talking about being regenerated who have no faith. It cannot be, it is impossible. We can have no knowledge of such a thing as regeneration which is not accompanied with some degree of mental motion and consciousness. Regeneration is not a thing which takes place upon matter, it is a thing of spirit. The birth of the spirit must be the subject of consciousness, and though a man may not be able to say that at such and such a moment he was regenerated, yet the act of faith is a consciousness of regeneration. The moment I believe in Jesus Christ, my faith is an index to me of a work that has gone on within, and the secret work within, and the open act of faith without, God has joined together, and let no man put asunder.

Those who believe not are unregenerate, though they may have been sprinkled by the best priest who ever had episcopal hands laid on his head. If a man believes not he is unregenerate whether baptized or not, but if he believes, he is regenerate, though he may never have been baptized at all. Baptism may outwardly express regeneration after it has been received, and then the symbol becomes valuable, but without faith there can be no regeneration, even though baptism be administered a thousand times.

Observe what kind of new birth it is which all believers have received. It is one which comes “not of bloods,” (so the original has it), neither by the blood of circumcision, nor of the Passover, nor especially by the blood of descent.

Sin runs in the blood, if you will, but grace does not. We are not born Christians by the mere fact of our being the children of godly Christian people. Neither are we born “of the will of man.” The best men in the world cannot create us anew, if they pray for us never so much, the power of their will apart from the will of God cannot avail. We are not born “of the will of the flesh,” that is to say, our own free will does not cause it. If a man could will himself into a state of newness of heart, the fact of his being willing to be in such a state would, I suppose, be evidence of his being in that state already, but the human will is powerless in itself to produce regeneration. We must be born again from above, the Holy Spirit must, by His divine energy, enter into us and make us new creatures, for such a heavenly birth is essential to eternal life.

Now, I think I hear some troubled conscience saying, “When you said just now that if I trusted in Christ I would be saved, I rejoiced, but when you say we must be born again, that saying seems so

mysterious that I am troubled.” My dear friend, there is no need to be troubled. If you trust in Christ then you *are* born again. I have already told you that there is no possibility of a soul ever relying upon the Savior truly unless there has been a previous new birth to produce his faith. If you are tonight able to put your whole trust in Jesus Christ as God’s dear Son, and to take Him to be yours, though your new birth may be too mysterious a thing for you to know much about, for “the wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, and whither it goes,” yet, your faith is a sufficient index that you are really a partaker of the new birth. I do not want to open the boiler of a steam engine for the sake of knowing what quantity of water there is in it, I am perfectly satisfied by looking at the “telltale.” Now faith is the “telltale” of the human soul, where there is faith there is new life, where there is no faith there is no life.

There is no need to dissect a man, anatomize him, and cut him up in order to find out his spirit, you would destroy him in so doing, but when you see the man has action, motion, energy, when you put your hand upon his breast and feel the heaving of the lung, you know that there is life. Now, if I may say so, faith is the heaving of the spiritual lungs, if you believe in Jesus Christ you are a living man, you have been born, “not of the will of man, but of God.”

I should like to ask one question before I am done—*have all of you received Christ?* “Yes,” or “No”? You good people up in the gallery there, I am not going to ask you where you worship generally, nor to what church you belong, but have you received Christ? “Well, sir, we were baptized.” I do not care a farthing at this moment whether you were baptized or not! I leave that question till we have settled an earlier one. Have you received Christ? “Well, we take the sacrament.” Never mind that, have you received Christ? Do you trust Him and Him only? To the point now—can your soul say—

*“On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand”?*

Have you received Jesus Christ, each one of you, and if you have not, why not? Is there anything so hard in receiving Him? I have sometimes thought I should like to tell the tale of the cross for the first time to a number of savages who would just have sufficient culture to understand it—God was made flesh and dwelt among us, and sooner than men should suffer God suffered Himself, and because justice required punishment, “He bore the punishment instead” of sinners. Why, I think I see their eyes glistening, and I think their hearts must melt. But you have heard the tale so often, that it has become an old story to you!

However, I would like to put the question to you again—have you received Jesus Christ? “Well, I have not had much experience,” laments one, and another says, “I do not know much,” and another cries, “We have had family prayer for twenty years,” and another says, “My name is down for twenty guineas in several charitable institutions.” Well, all that is very well, but I do not care about any of these matters tonight. All I want to know is, have you received Christ? “Oh!” says one, “Of course, I was always brought up to it.” But you cannot be “brought up to it,” you must be brought down to it by being born again, there must be a change in your nature.

We do not preach the Gospel, as I have said before, to the depraved and debauched alone, we preach it to you good, excellent people, you whose honesty in trade, and whose moral character set you on high among your fellows, as upon a pinnacle. *You* must be born again, ladies and gentlemen, *you* must be born again, as well as the lowest of the low, and the poorest of the poor. We have the same Gospel to preach to Her Majesty the Queen as we have to the sinners in a refuge, or the rogues in a reformatory. We know of no difference in this matter between any of you. A difference of morality there is, and we are thankful for it, but *you* must be born again as much as the worst rebels in the world.

And you below here, have *you* received Christ? I know that many of you have, and that your hearts leap at the sound of His name. You can say—

*“Jesus, the very thought of Thee,
With rapture fills my breast.”*

But there are some of you who have not received Christ—I mean not merely you who are occasional hearers, but my constant hearers. You have received me, you believe what I say, but you have not received Christ, and you do not believe what He tells you. It is one thing to believe in your minister, but quite another to believe in Jesus Christ. I pray you never stop short in receiving anything because we say it, or because we seem to prove it, you must get it burned into you as with a red-hot iron by God the Holy Spirit’s power, or else it will be of no service to you.

I stood a few hours ago at the bedside of one of our brethren in Christ who seemed sorely sick and at the point of death. He could not speak aloud, but the soft and gentle words which he whispered in my ear were very precious. He had not his peace to make with God in his last hour, he had not then to seek Christ, but was full of perfect peace and rejoicing in unbroken calm. “He will not leave me, will He?” said he—“He cannot deny Himself, I may sink, but I cannot sink lower than He will go, for underneath me are the everlasting arms.” Oh, my brethren, the mere letter of Gospel doctrine will not do to die on, you must have the spirit of it in your heart, or you cannot be comforted by it. Believe me, it is stern work to die. A Christian dies peacefully, but it is no child’s play even to him. Some of us, when we have been sick and racked with pain, know that we have had to search for our evidences with much care and anxiety. I have turned over many a moldy old deed that laid by in the chest of my evidences to try if I could—

*“Read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,”*

and glad enough have I been to light on some such word as this—

*“Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee,”*

and to sing—

*“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”*

But, my hearers, what of some of you? The day is coming when the great assemblies of this house will seem but as things of nought, when this immense gathering will be but as a drop in a bucket compared with that greater gathering. The trumpet, ringing through earth and heaven, shall awaken the dead, the righteous and the wicked shall stand in judgment. We shall all be there, this company shall have no exception, there shall be no excuse for being absent on that tremendous day, and then there will be no question which will have so much weight as this one—HAVE YOU RECEIVED CHRIST?

I think I see the reaper coming. He is hastening to gather the vintage of the world, for the grapes are fully ripe. The ungodly must be gathered first, and there they are, thrown in clusters into the winepress of the wrath of God, while the dread angels of avenging justice tread the grapes until the blood flows out. Will you be there among the accursed clusters of Sodom and Gomorrah? Will you be there, you men of London, you dwellers in Newington and Walworth, who hear the Gospel constantly—will you be cast into the winepress of JEHOVAH’S wrath, and shall the streets be red with your blood?

Or will you be yonder, where, with golden sickle, trusting no angel to do the work, Christ Himself shall reap His golden corn, ear after ear, and take it all home with shoutings of delight to His Father’s garner? Will you see Him in that day, as the God that died for you? Will you see Him with exultation? Will you meet Him in the air, and so be forever with the Lord? If so, then receive Jesus, and He will receive you, take Him into your hearts, and He will take you into heaven. Take Him, His cross, His

people, His Gospel, His doctrines, take Him, to “have and to hold” Him, “for better and for worse,” and then not even “death” shall “part” you, but you shall be with Him “in the day of His appearing.”

May the Lord seal His word with His own blessing!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 1:1-18.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.